

Digital media's role in overcoming anxiety, enhancing linguistic elements and fostering motivation for developing speaking skills

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ABSTRACT

The qualitative study investigated the digital media impact on language learning, focusing on overcoming anxiety, enhancing linguistic elements, and fostering motivation for developing speaking skills among four English as foreign language (EFL) learners at an Islamic University in Malang, Indonesia. Through the use of observations and in-depth interviews, the study found that learners utilized various digital media such as storytelling, movies, variety shows, and song videos to aid their speaking learning process. The findings indicated that digital media played a significant role in helping learners overcome language anxiety by providing a platform for practice without direct peer interaction, thereby reducing feelings of fear and shyness. Additionally, digital media usage contributed to linguistic element enhancement, including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and speaking fluency. Moreover, learners' motivation for developing speaking skills was positively influenced by the enjoyment derived from using digital media which increased their willingness to practice speaking. The study underscores the importance of integrating digital media into EFL speaking instruction due to its potential to address language anxiety, improve linguistic elements, and foster motivation for speaking ability development. By leveraging digital media tools effectively, educators can create engaging and supportive learning milieus that provide to the diverse needs of language learners, eventually enhancing learners' speaking skills.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking fluency is highly essential for communal connection, as it might empower individuals to support and sustain communal relations, and it might assist individuals to have information exchange [1]–[3]. Speaking fluency indicates communicative competence [4]. Fluency in English speaking might enable one to successfully participate in global communication since many individuals worldwide use English to connect [5]. A proficient English speaker might demonstrate fluency, universal appeal, charm, wisdom, delight in

privileges, and display hard determination [6]. However, reaching fluency in speaking requires considerable effort, as learners might encounter challenges that could obstruct their development of speaking skills.

Learners' speaking challenges could be caused by several factors such as a limited vocabulary, poor grammar and spelling, and dependence on one's mother tongue that might obstruct the speaking proficiency development [7]. Besides, learners' problems in speaking might happen due to both linguistic and non-linguistic factors [8]. In addition, learners' problems in speaking could happen due to multiple factors: internal and external factors. Internal factors cover issues like feeling afraid of doing mistakes, feeling hesitant and having low motivation. External factors might happen due to influences of environments, such as peer relationships and surrounding circumstances [9]. Learners' problems in speaking might happen due to speaking practice deficiency [10]. To handle these speaking problems, learners might use digital media to improve their speaking skills [11].

Using digital media learners might develop their speaking skills [12]. Some digital media like games in a collaborative design [13], digital storytelling [14], latest apps, e-textbooks, games, and digital tools [15] might facilitate learners to achieve speaking skills. In addition, digital media might raise learners' motivation to develop their speaking proficiency [16]. Besides, using digital media might make learning to speak more enjoyable, fascinating, and communicative [17]. This further might facilitate learners effectively to achieve speaking proficiency [18]. In English as foreign language (EFL) learning, digital media usage might have some other positive impacts such as the mastery of macro skills of language and critical thinking [19]–[21]. Thus, digital media usage might have some positive impacts [22] in improving learners' linguistic elements including addressing language anxiety.

Language anxiety might bring learners to be difficult to achieve language acquisition [23]–[25]. It might be apparent in some different forms such as fear, self-doubt, and nervousness [26]. It might hinder students from speaking fluently or accurately [27]. It might be caused by feeling afraid of negative evaluation from their speaking partners or teachers or unfamiliar linguistic contexts [23]. As a result, learners might find it difficult to actively participate in the class [28]. Furthermore, this might result in them having hard to develop their language skills and competencies [29]. Using digital media, learners might improve their confidence, technical knowledge, and language aptitude, and reduce speaking anxiety [30]. Besides, to be able to handle language anxiety, learners need to improve their motivation in learning [31].

Motivation is very crucial for the success of the language learning process [32], [33]. Learners' feeling enjoys [34] toward their task performance might be indicated as having intrinsic motivation. Motivation functions as a driving force that might help learners solve their difficulties in speaking and have endurance in trying to improve themselves [35]. Having motivation, learners might maintain engagement and involvement during the language learning activities [36]. Motivation might be in the form of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation might cover personal interest while the extrinsic motivation might result from academic or career purposes [37]. Learners having good motivation might show self-assurance and use their time and energy to improve their linguistic elements and engage actively in some discourse events [38]. Therefore, in speaking skills, motivation might be crucial as it might help learners develop their speaking skills [39].

Learners having good speaking skills might be active in a discussion expressing their ideas effectively and improving their academic achievements [40]. They might also become more confident and efficient in discussions in various social and professional contexts. In addition, they might enhance their academic and professional careers [41]. Besides, having good speaking skills in EFL learning might bring learners to have cultural awareness enabling them to communicate with native speakers and participate in real-life language situations better [36]. Next, digital media might help learners to achieve academic achievement specifically to develop speaking skills [42]. Afterwards, learners might develop their speaking skills when they have strong learning motivation supported by digital media providing songs, games, movies, and other social media [43].

Several recent studies have reported the significance of digital media usage to enhance learners' speaking proficiency. For example, Maloney [21] reported that learners' use of digital technology might influence their language proficiency. To agree with that, Mesa [22] reported that learners' use of digital platforms might improve their speaking skills without concerns about their peers' opinions. In line with that, several studies [12], [44] stated that the use of digital media like storytelling might develop learners' language skills due to their feeling more engaged and enjoying the learning process. In addition, Jaya and Sucipto [42] reported that using hybrid learning with digital media might influence learners' academic performance. Next, Gultom *et al.* [45] reported that using digital storytelling learners might improve their speaking performance. Supporting that, Cameron [19] reported that digital media usage in learning might improve learners' speaking skills. Thus, studies have shown that learners' digital media usage improved their language performance. However, the previous studies focused on the digital media usage by a group of learners focusing on their language performance, whereas this particular study probed into the digital media

role of four EFL learners in overcoming language anxiety, enhancing linguistic elements, and fostering motivation for developing speaking skills. This study aimed to investigate the positive impact of digital media on language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills. It explored how digital media might reduce anxiety, enhance linguistic elements and learners' motivation leading to better language learning outcomes. This study holds significance as it might potentially transform language education by offering digital media-based strategies for overcoming anxiety, enhancing linguistic elements and fostering motivation for developing speaking skills. This further might lead to more effective language learning experiences for learners to achieve their learning goals.

2. METHOD

The current study employed a qualitative research methodology within the English department, focusing on four third-semester students (referred to as S1, S2, S3, and S4). They were selected purposefully for their active participation in speaking activities both in group and class discussions, as well as their proficiency in speaking. These students, enrolled in a speaking class, were tasked with utilizing digital media as part of their speaking learning process. They were given the autonomy to choose the digital media tools they preferred, such as mobile phones or laptops, for activities conducted both in and outside the classroom. Following the consumption of digital media, the students engaged in discussions with their peers, first within small groups and then continuing in a larger class setting. This approach aimed to enhance their speaking skills through interactive engagement with the chosen digital media tools.

Data collection in the study involved a combination of observation and in-depth interviews. To gather information on learners' language anxiety, questions adapted from Horwitz *et al.* [23] were utilized. Additionally, observation was conducted to focus on how learners utilized digital tools to enhance their speaking skills. During the observation, the researcher maintained a non-participatory role, closely monitoring the learners' interactions with digital media and their engagement in speaking activities with peers both in group and class discussions. The utilization of Horwitz's questions in the study aligns with previous research that the emphasis on observing learners' use of digital tools resonates with studies that have explored the impact of technology on language learning and anxiety [46].

The study aimed to get a thorough insight into digital media usage on learners related to overcoming language anxiety, enhancing linguistic elements and fostering motivation for developing speaking skills through a combination of observation and interviews. This methodology is supported by existing research highlighting the significance of addressing students' anxiety to enhance their language learning process [47]. By incorporating observation, in-depth interviews, and adapted questions from Horwitz *et al.* [23], the study established a sturdy framework for exploring learners' language anxiety and the impact of digital tools on improving their speaking skills. Drawing on established research, the study contributes to the discourse on language anxiety and technology integration in language learning, specifically emphasizing the role of digital media in aiding EFL learners to overcome anxiety, enhance linguistic abilities, and increase motivation for developing speaking proficiency.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is organized according to the following sequence: feeling of anxiety experienced by subject 1 (S1), subject 2 (S2), subject 3 (S3), and subject 4 (S4) in learning speaking, digital media used by S1, S2, S3, S4 in learning speaking and the ways and reasons S1, S2, S3, S4 used digital media related to the handle of language anxiety, linguistic elements enhancement and the motivation improvement. Next, each subject is assigned a code such as S1, S2, S3, and S4.

3.1. Feeling of anxiety in learning speaking

Questions regarding feelings of anxiety in learning to speak were posed to the subjects. The transcripts of their responses are:

"... I sometimes get nervous or anxious during my speaking practice when I speak in front of friends and I do not know the topic well and forget the vocabulary or pronunciation. It makes me difficult to continue speaking..." (S1)

"... In speaking, feeling anxious when I discuss with friends and I do not know the vocab to say or the form of tenses to use. Also do not know or master the topic of discussion and it is disturbing because I cannot speak fluently..." (S2)

"... Speaking anxiety comes when I should present the presentation in the class and I do not know the topic, forget the vocabs and afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation so I often stop speaking..." (S3)

“... I feel anxious, especially when I discuss in a group or class discussion and I do not understand the topic or sometimes afraid of doing mistakes in pronunciation or grammar or confused to choose the right dictions. Because of this, I can't speak well and sometimes I lose my self-confidence...” (S4)

3.2. Digital media used in learning speaking

Questions regarding the use of digital media in learning speaking were posed to the subjects. The transcripts of their responses are:

“... I like, as I said before, I used several digital media to improve my speaking skills such as What Sapp to practice speaking via mutual calls with friends and YouTube to watch songs, short stories, movies, etc...” (S1)

“... I use Netflix and any other platform to watch films for shadowing...” (S2)

“... I like to use YouTube, especially by watching songs providing some lyrics...” (S3)

“... I like to use my smartphone as a tool to learn speaking such as to note and record rather than asking friends. Also using YouTube to watch variety shows and Podcast on Spotify on variety shows.” (S4).

3.3. The ways and reasons using digital media to overcome language anxiety, enhance linguistic elements, and foster motivation for developing speaking skill

Questions dealing with the ways and reasons the subjects used digital media to overcome language anxiety, enhance linguistic elements and foster motivation for developing speaking skills were posed to the subjects and the transcripts of their answers are:

“I can practice speaking by talking to myself imitating actors in the video or doing a phone call with my friends using English without meeting face to face. It made me feel less nervous and I enjoyed it more than having to meet my speaking partner directly... It improves my motivation to learn speaking because I can have new vocabs, pronunciation and speak more fluently like a native... I want to watch more videos and speak via my phone more to improve my speaking...” (S1)

“... As I said in my answer before, I do shadowing techniques with movies. This technique helps me handle my language anxiety because I have to speak as natives do, and this technique needn't any partners...So, I don't feel shy when I make mistakes...I enjoyed learning using this strategy. Shadowing technique can improve my motivation because with this technique I have to repeat the part of the movie. With this technique, I can improve my pronunciation, vocabs and fluency of speaking like natives...I want to watch more movies to improve my speaking skills...” (S2)

“I prefer to use YouTube, especially by watching song videos having some lyrics. I could get new vocabs and know the meaning of the words... I don't feel anxious and I even feel happy and enjoy with the songs...from the song videos in YouTube I can improve my vocabs and pronunciation and grammar too. It has given more interest to practice speaking... I want to watch more song videos...” (S3)

“I use digital media in various ways such as my notes, so I'll type my point in my phone and make it as guidance when I am speaking. Also, as a recording tool... in speaking, recording could help me to improve my presentation, vocabs, pronunciation and grammar too... I am not afraid of making mistakes... I fell enjoyed using it. I even feel sure that I can perform well using these tools... It could improve my motivation in learning speaking...I want to use more digital media to help me learning speaking” (S4)

3.4. Summary of the findings

It was found that all subjects—S1, S2, S3, and S4—experienced language anxiety during their speaking learning process. This anxiety happened due to several factors such as lack of limited mastery of the discussion topic, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Next, all subjects employed digital media in their learning speaking process. Using various digital media they might handle language anxiety, improve linguistic elements and foster motivation for developing speaking skills. Subject 1 (S1) used WhatsApp and YouTube in her speaking learning. She enjoyed learning to speak using this media as she might speak like a native, and improve linguistic elements such as vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and it has motivated her to learn to speak without being afraid of peers' judgement bringing her to achieve speaking proficiency.

Subject 2 (S2) used Netflix and other platforms to watch movies in her speaking learning. She did not need any partners in learning so she did not feel shy when she made mistakes. This technique might

improve her motivation in learning to speak as she might have better pronunciation, more vocabulary and fluency in speaking like a native. This might make her to have more learning by watching more movies.

Subject 3 (S3) used YouTube to watch song videos providing some lyrics. Using this media, he might improve vocabs, pronunciation and grammar. Then, he felt enjoyed and motivated bringing him to have more speaking practices to develop speaking skills by watching more song videos.

Subject 4 (S4) used my notes and recording on her smartphone to practice speaking. My note was used to write some important points on her mobile phone to have a good spoken presentation. Next, she also watched a variety of shows on YouTube and English Podcasts on Spotify. Using those media, she improved her vocabulary, presentation, pronunciation, and grammar. She might handle anxiety and did not feel afraid of making mistakes; she even felt enjoyed and motivated and wanted to use more digital media to help her improve her speaking skills.

3.5. Discussion

First of all, a significant finding in our study is that all learners—S1, S2, S3, and S4—experienced language anxiety in their speaking learning. This anxiety arose due to their limited mastery of the discussion topic, forgetting vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. This feeling of anxiety might hinder their ability to develop their speaking skill. This finding aligns with several studies [48], [49], which reported that language anxiety is a common issue among language learners, influenced by factors affecting their oral performance. Several factors contribute to language anxiety, including difficulty in finding appropriate words, feelings of inferiority, poor pronunciation, lack of proficiency, and limited experience in presentations [50]. Oteir and Al-Otaibi [51] indicated that language anxiety might happen because of the fear of making mistakes, teachers' error corrections, and speaking in front of teachers or peers. Additionally, Jin [52] reported that language anxiety might arise due to the fear of speaking in front of others and concerns about grammatical errors. Liu and Wu [53] stated that language anxiety might occur due to the fear of speaking English in class and a lack of confidence in the target language. Furthermore, anxiety [54] might arise from shyness in communication, fear of failure, and fear of negative evaluation. Finally, language anxiety might be caused by a lack of self-confidence, incomprehensible input, and insufficient preparation [55]. To handle language anxiety, the subjects have used digital media in learning to speak.

Then, the study found that there are several digital media they used in their speaking learning such as storytelling, movies, variety shows, and song videos. Using this digital media, students might feel relaxed and enjoyed. They were not feeling shy or afraid of making mistakes as they do not need speaking partners in speaking learning using digital media. They might also improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and speaking fluency. These findings prove that the utilization of digital media might enhance students' speaking skills [22]. In addition, digital media usage might encourage learners to improve their oral production without feeling fear of peer judgment. Then, Panggua *et al.* [56] reported that using digital media in language learning might make students more creative and innovative. Besides, it might improve learners' vocabulary and self-confidence. This further might improve students' speaking performance [57]. Thus, the research indicates that in language learning, the incorporation of digital media might address language anxiety and enhance speaking skills among learners.

Next, the study found that by using digital media learners might enjoy and improve their speaking skills. These findings are in line with the study by Maulina *et al.* [11] reported that digital media has a pivotal role in ensuring enjoyable learning experiences. This media might even make learning more engaging, dramatic and communicative to bring learners to have better-speaking competence [44]. Supporting that, Heri [58] reported that utilizing audio-visual improves learners' speaking skills. To agree with that, another study by Zhang *et al.* [36] reported that collaborative online international learning using some digital media might improve learners' speaking skills. Thus, by using digital media, students can engage in speaking activities more comfortably and enjoyably, leading to improvements in vocabulary, fluency, and overall speaking performance.

Afterwards, this study found that by using digital media students might get improvement with their linguistic elements. This is in line with Zhou *et al.* [59] reported that learners' use of digital-based learning might improve their phonological skills. To agree with that, a study by Butarbutar *et al.* [60] reported that speaking based on digital media might make the class more feasible and effective in improving students' speaking skills. Numerous benefits exist concerning the application of digital media during the class [61]. It might enhance learners' language macro skills [40]. In addition, Wu and Lambencio [62] reported that EFL learners' digital media usage might improve their vocabularies. Other studies reported that speaking materials containing audio and visual resources might help learners improve their vocabulary [63], grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension [11]. Supporting that, a study by Zhou *et al.* [59] reported that specific apps might help learners in learning and gaining new expressions. To agree with that, Butarbutar *et al.* [60] found that using mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) might arouse learners' engagement in some learning activities including self-directed language learning. It further might facilitate learners' vocabulary enhancement. In line with that, by using Instagram, learners might enhance their vocab, grammar, pronunciation, accent, motivation, knowledge of culture, and speaking skills [64].

Subsequently, the study found that all students approved that using digital media, might resolve their language anxiety and feel enjoyed in their speaking practices. These results are in line with Mesa [22] reported that the use of digital media might bring learners to enjoy their learning and they were not afraid of making mistakes or the negative concerns of their peers. Additionally, learners engaging in the interactive digital media assignment (IDMA) might improve their self-confidence, technical literacy, and language skills, and decrease speaking anxiety [65]. Next, digital learning might make learning to become more interesting and enjoyable [66]; it might be used as learning materials both in the classroom and at home. The use of digital storytelling might serve as a crucial medium to make learning experiences become more enjoyable and effective [44]. Learners enjoyed cartoon videos and engaged in interactive activities, both individually and in teams [66].

In addition, related to the function of digital media that might enhance learners' motivation, all subjects agreed that digital media usage might improve their motivation to learn to speak. It is shown by wanting to have more digital media in their learning speaking. Dealing with digital media usage to improve learners' speaking motivation, the study agrees with previous findings [12]. [64] reported that digital media might improve learners' motivation in language learning. To agree with that, a study by Rustan *et al.* [61] reported that learners' use of digital media might improve their motivation in language learning and it is shown by their activeness and communicative in the learning process. Further, Shadiev and Wang [67] reported that language learning activities supported by technology offer learners enriching educational understandings, thereby bolstering their engagement, motivation and confidence in the learning process. Next, utilizing e-learning might improve students' motivation to reach their learning goals [68]. In addition, digital storytelling has the potential to heighten learners' enthusiasm, making the learning experience more enjoyable and increasing motivation for learning [44].

Next, dealing with the use of digital media to develop speaking skills, all subjects agreed that digital media usage might develop speaking skills. It happened due to the improvement of their linguistic elements like vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and speaking fluency. This study is in line with Anas *et al.* [69] reported that the use of digital media in doing certain language tasks might improve learners' language performance. The four learners used digital media during their learning speaking. Using digital media, learners might improve their linguistic elements leading to an improvement in their speaking proficiency. This shows that using digital media in learning speaking like mobile-based interactive media might enhance learners' learning outcomes [30]. In addition, using digital media, such as digital game-based learning (DGBL) [70] might be an effective medium [71] to upgrade learners' language performance. In addition, digital media usage might improve learners' English proficiency [72]. Afterwards, in the teaching and learning process using digital media might improve learners' learning motivation and language proficiency macro skills including the improvement of speaking skills [12].

Finally, digital media might have positive impacts on students in their learning process to achieve speaking proficiency [73], [74]. Further, this study agreed with Hafour [65] reported that digital media assignments have improved learners' linguistic elements including oral content and fluency. In addition, by using IDMA, students might improve their self-confidence and language performance and reduce speaking anxiety. In this study, it was found that all subjects agreed that using digital media in language learning, might address their language anxiety, enhance linguistic elements and foster motivation for developing speaking skills. In conclusion, the integration of digital media in language learning holds significant potential for EFL learners by effectively addressing language anxiety, enhancing linguistic elements, and fostering motivation to develop speaking skills. Thus, it is crucial to create engaging learning environments through digital media to enable learners to practice speaking English without feeling of anxiety, ultimately leading to improve linguistic elements, motivation, and speaking skills.

4. CONCLUSION

Digital media plays an essential role in EFL learning. Employing digital media allows learners to effectively handle language anxiety, improve linguistic elements, and foster motivation to develop speaking skills. Digital media allows learners to mitigate language anxiety by enabling speaking practice without direct interaction with partners, thereby reducing feelings of fear, shyness, and anxiety. Digital media also enhances various linguistic elements such as vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency in speaking. Furthermore, digital media fosters motivation for speaking skill development by making learning enjoyable and increasing learners' eagerness to engage in speaking exercises through repeated use of digital media. In conclusion, digital media usage is crucial due to its ability to overcome language anxiety, enhance linguistic elements, and stimulate motivation for developing speaking skills. Educators might effectively assist students in developing their speaking skills by addressing issues such as overcoming language anxiety, enhancing linguistic elements and fostering motivation in the speaking learning process.

The present study is subject to certain constraints, predominantly arising from a limited sample size, thereby restricting the extensive generalizability of our results. Future researchers could overcome these constraints by replicating the study using more varied samples to enhance the generalizability of the outcomes. Furthermore, it is advisable to employ a mixed method, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, to facilitate a comprehensive analysis that can provide deeper insights into the topic on the impacts of digital media on language acquisition.

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